



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 167

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2021

No. 183

Senate

The Senate met at 10:02 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, touch the secret place inside each of us and know our hearts. In the stillness of this prayer moment, make us so transparent that we shall connect to Your power.

Lord, strengthen our lawmakers by the power of Your Holy Spirit, as the light of Your wisdom illuminates the recesses of their hearts. Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. When this day is done, may they look back with the realization that they have accomplished Your purposes.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 19, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Christine P. O'Hearn, of New Jersey, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Jersey.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, I began the process for the Senate to hold a vote on the Freedom to Vote Act, a commonsense proposal that would make it easier for every eligible American to participate in free and fair elections.

The bill, which my colleagues, including yourself, very diligently have worked on for months to put together will set basic standards to improve ballot access across the country, end partisan gerrymandering, and fight the influence of dark money and special in-

terests in our politics. It will go a long way toward restoring people's faith in our democracy while respecting the role of States in administering elections.

Every Senate Democrat has united around this legislation, and I thank all of my colleagues, including you, Mr. President, who worked so hard on this bill. I especially want to thank my friend Senator MANCHIN, who has spent weeks reaching out to our Republican colleagues in an effort to find common ground. I applaud him for his commitment to trying to get something done on this issue in a bipartisan way if we can.

The clock is ticking for this Chamber to take meaningful action to protect Americans' right to the franchise. So, tomorrow, the Senate will vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to the Freedom to Vote Act.

Every Senator will have to answer a straightforward question: Should the Senate be allowed to simply begin a debate on voting rights, as has been done many times throughout our history? That is what tomorrow's vote is about: Do the Members of this Chamber think protecting our democracy is worthy of even a debate in the Senate?

Senate Democrats think it absolutely is. If our Republican colleagues don't like our ideas for fighting voter suppression and guarding against election subversion, then they ought to tell us what they have in mind. If they are so confident of their position, then let's debate the issue on the Senate floor. What is there to be afraid of by allowing simply a debate?

Democrats are ready to work with Republicans in good faith if they vote to begin a debate on voting rights. We know disagreements run deep. We don't hide from that. But if our Republican colleagues have good ideas, we will work with them. We will listen to them, and if these ideas are truly aligned with the goals of this bill to protect our democracy, we will work to include them in the final text.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S7037